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NEWS RELEASE

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Embargo until: April 10, 2012 @ 10 a.m.

National Report Praises Rhode Island Commitment to Pre-K Programs

Rhode Island continues to improve the quality and the extent of the prekindergarten programs in the state, according to a report that the National Institute for Early Education Research released today (April 10).

The report, “[The State of Preschool 2011](#),” praises Rhode Island for increasing enrollment in the Rhode Island Prekindergarten Program, which at present serves about 108 4-year-olds in six sites (in Central, Falls, Providence, and Warwick).

The report also notes that Rhode Island is one of only five states to achieve all 10 of the institute’s benchmarks for quality standards.

“Rhode Island is building on a strong foundation of quality in preschool education, and prospects for further gains are promising in view of the state’s successful competition in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge that brings \$50 million in new funds to the effort,” said Steve Barnett, director of the institute. “We urge Rhode Island to follow through on plans to incorporate pre-K into the school-funding program, as it will provide funding stability going forward and avoid the ‘yo-yo effect’ in funding seen in a number of states in recent years.”

“Learning in the early years is the foundation for all that follows,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “All Rhode Islanders should be proud of the investments we have made in early-childhood education. We are committed to using our Race to the Top funds to continue improving the quality of our early-learning programs and to prepare our youngest learners for success in school.”

Rhode Island is one of five states to achieve all 10 of the benchmarks for quality standards for prekindergarten programs because Rhode Island:

- has a comprehensive set of early-learning standards;
- requires degrees, college credits, and specialized training for teachers and assistant teachers;
- requires 20 hours of in-service training for teachers;
- sets a maximum class size of 18;
- sets a staff-child ratio of 1 to 9;
- provides screening and referrals for vision, hearing, health, and developmental issues;
- provides daily meals or snacks; and
- schedules site visits and other monitoring.

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